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ABSTRACT

The contribution of the traditionally black institutions (TBIs) to the undergraduate education of blacks in 20 states was studied, with attention to trends in enrollments and degrees from 1970-1982. From 1970 to 1976, the number of black full-time undergraduates almost doubled in 17 southern states and Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Ohio. In 1970, the black colleges enrolled 60 percent of the black full-time undergraduates in these states; by 1976, the black colleges enrolled 40 percent. During 1970-1976, black enrollment increased by over 150,000 in these 20 states. During 1976-1982, enrollment increased only slightly, by only 4,000. The TBIs had 13,000 fewer black undergraduates in 1982 than in 1976, while the other institutions in these states had 17,000 more. The black students were heavily concentrated in two-year colleges. The trends in black enrollment in the late 1970s were similar to the trends in baccalaureate degrees awarded to blacks. The total number of bachelor's degrees earned by blacks was about the same in 1976 as in 1981. The number of degrees awarded to blacks by the TBIs decreased almost 3,000 in this period. However, there was a corresponding increase in black baccalaureates from the other institutions in these states. Fields of study pursued by blacks were also identified. (SW)

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TRADITIONALLY BLACK INSTITUTIONS AND THE BACCALAUREATE EDUCATION OF BLACKS IN THE SOUTH: A Statistical Overview of Enrollment and Degree Trends From 1970 to 1982

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A paper presented at the 9th
National Conference on Blacks
in Higher Education, March 30, 1984

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Introduction

This study describes the contribution of the Traditionally Black Institutions (TBI's) to the undergraduate education of blacks [1] in the 20 States where these institutions are located. (These States are shown on Chart 1 of the handout.) I have limited my analysis to the region where the black colleges are located because 9 out of 10 of their students come from that region, and because the black colleges play a major role in the higher education of that part of the country. For simplicity, I will loosely refer to the region where these institutions are located as " the South", even though States such as Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Ohio are included.

The information I will be presenting comes from Federal government surveys in which virtually all students and degree recipients are identified by race. Using data from these surveys, it is possible to trace the trends in black undergraduate enrollment and degree awards in the South from 1970 to 1982. Because the trends in the first 6 years of this period were so different from those in the latter 6 years, I will discuss each of these time periods separately.

1/ This paper focuses only on the black full-time undergraduates in the TBI's. Because these students represent only 62 percent of all TBI students, their enrollment and degree trends should not be equated with the trends for TBI's in general.

Enrollment from 1970 to 1976

From 1970 to 1976, the number of black full-time undergraduates in the South almost doubled. Federal legislation and policies aimed at reducing barriers to higher education for minorities and for low-income youth certainly contributed greatly to these enrollment increases. But the demographic changes among black youth also had a significant impact. In the early 1970's, there was a large increase in the number of black youth, accompanied by large increases in the percent who graduated from high school and in the percent who went on to college.

Reflecting the expanding population of black youth eligible to go to college and the greater opportunities they had to do so, the number of black full-time undergraduates in the South increased by over 150 thousand from 1970 to 1976 (from 213 thousand to 365 thousand). In this period, the Traditionally Black Institutions had small increases in the number of black undergraduates, but these increases accounted for only about 10 percent of the total growth that occurred in the South. Most of the growth in black undergraduate enrollment took place in the other institutions in the South, especially in the 2-year colleges. As a result of the increases in the other institutions, the Traditionally Black Institutions enrolled a declining proportion of the total black undergraduates in the South. In 1970, the black colleges enrolled 60 percent; by 1976, they enrolled 40 percent of the black full-time undergraduates in the South.

Enrollment from 1976 to 1982

Compared with the dramatic increases in total black undergraduate enrollment in the early 1970's, the late 1970's could be characterized as a period of stabilization in the South (and in the nation as a whole[2]). In spite of a continued increase in the high school graduation rates for black youth, the proportion of these black high school graduates who went on to college did not increase, stabilizing at a point far below that for whites.[3]

From 1976 to 1982, the number of black full-time undergraduates in the South increased by only 4 thousand (from 365 thousand to 369 thousand), a minute increase compared with the 150 thousand increase of the previous 6 years. As seen in Chart 2, however, there were subtle shifts occurring between the Traditionally Black Institutions and the other institutions in the South. The Traditionally Black Institutions had 13 thousand fewer black undergraduates in 1982 than in 1976, while the other institutions in the South had 17 thousand more.

2/ See: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Participation of Black Students in Higher Education: A Statistical Profile from 1970-71 to 1980-81, Special Report, November 1983.

3/ The proportion of black high school graduates aged 20-24 in the South who enrolled in college and completed one year was 39 percent in 1976 and 37 percent in 1982. The rate for whites was 44 percent in 1982.

By 1982, the Traditionally Black Institutions enrolled 37 percent of all black full-time undergraduates in the South. The black full-time undergraduates that were enrolled in the other institutions in the South were heavily concentrated in 2-year colleges; 45 percent of blacks were in 2-year colleges compared with 23 percent of whites.

Degree Awards from 1976 to 1981*

The trends in black enrollment in the late 1970's were similar to the trends in black baccalaureate degrees. As shown in Chart 3, the total number of bachelor's degrees awarded to blacks in the South was about the same in 1976 as in 1981. Again, the stability in the total level of degree awards to blacks masked changes between the Traditionally Black Institutions and the other institutions in the South. The number of bachelor's degrees awarded to blacks by the Traditionally Black Institutions decreased almost 3 thousand in this period (from 22,200 in 1976 to 19,400 in 1981); however, there was a corresponding increase in black baccalaureates from the other institutions in the South. As a result of these changes, the proportion of black baccalaureates in the South who received their degrees from the Traditionally Black Institutions declined from 60 percent in 1976 to 51 percent in 1981. Even with this decline, it is significant that in 1981, the 83 Traditionally Black Institutions (which award baccalaureate degrees) conferred more degrees to blacks than the other 673 baccalaureate institutions in the South.

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* Academic years 1975-1976 to 1980-1981. Academic years are referred to by the year in which they end.

The contribution of the Traditionally Black Institutions in producing black graduates is greater in some disciplines than in others. In 1981, the black colleges awarded over half of the bachelor's degrees earned by blacks in the field of education, and therefore probably still produce the majority of black teachers in the South. Over half of the black graduates in business and management came from the black colleges. The black colleges also graduated over half of the black baccalaureates in the South in most of the scientific fields, including engineering, computer sciences, mathematics, physical sciences, and biological sciences.

Conclusion

It is evident that, 30 years after the Brown decision, the Traditionally Black Institutions still play a major role in the higher education of blacks in the South, in spite of the slowly declining numbers of black undergraduates and baccalaureates in these institutions. In addition to these disturbing declines, it is also unsettling to see that there have not been significant increases in the number of black undergraduates at the predominantly white institutions in recent years. Even when the students from the Traditionally Black Institutions and from the predominantly white institutions are combined, blacks are still greatly underrepresented in higher education. While blacks comprise 20 percent of the " college-age population" in the South, they comprise less than 10 percent of the bachelor's degree recipients. Elias Blake, president of Clark College, summarized the current situation well when he wrote, "We are stalled ... at unacceptable levels of inequality."

CHARTS FOR THE PRESENTATION ON:

Traditionally Black Institutions and the Baccalaureate Education of Blacks in the South: 1970 to 1982

by Susan Hill

Chart 1. — Location of the Traditionally Black Institutions

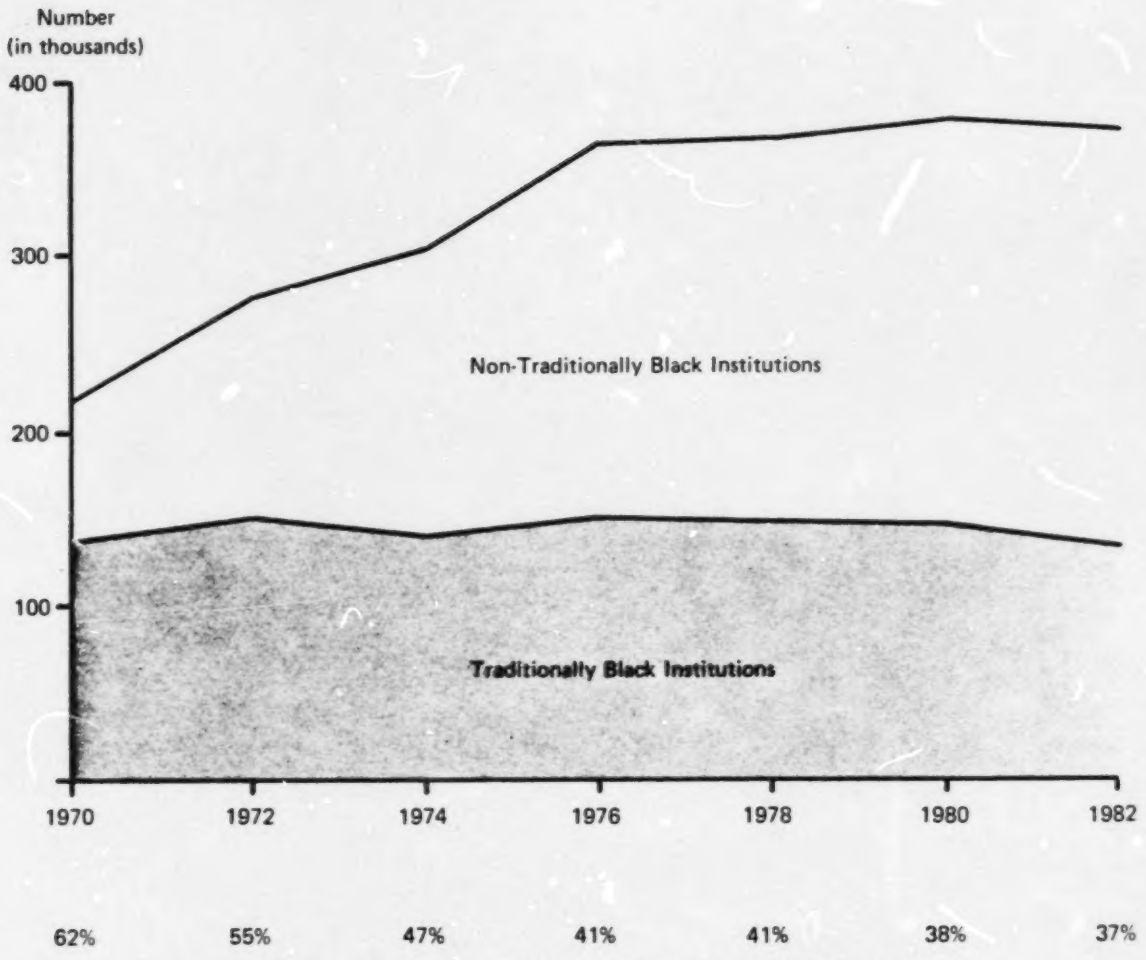
Key:

x Public 4-year TBI's
▪ Public 2-year TBI's

o Private 4-year TBI's
● Private 2-year TBI's

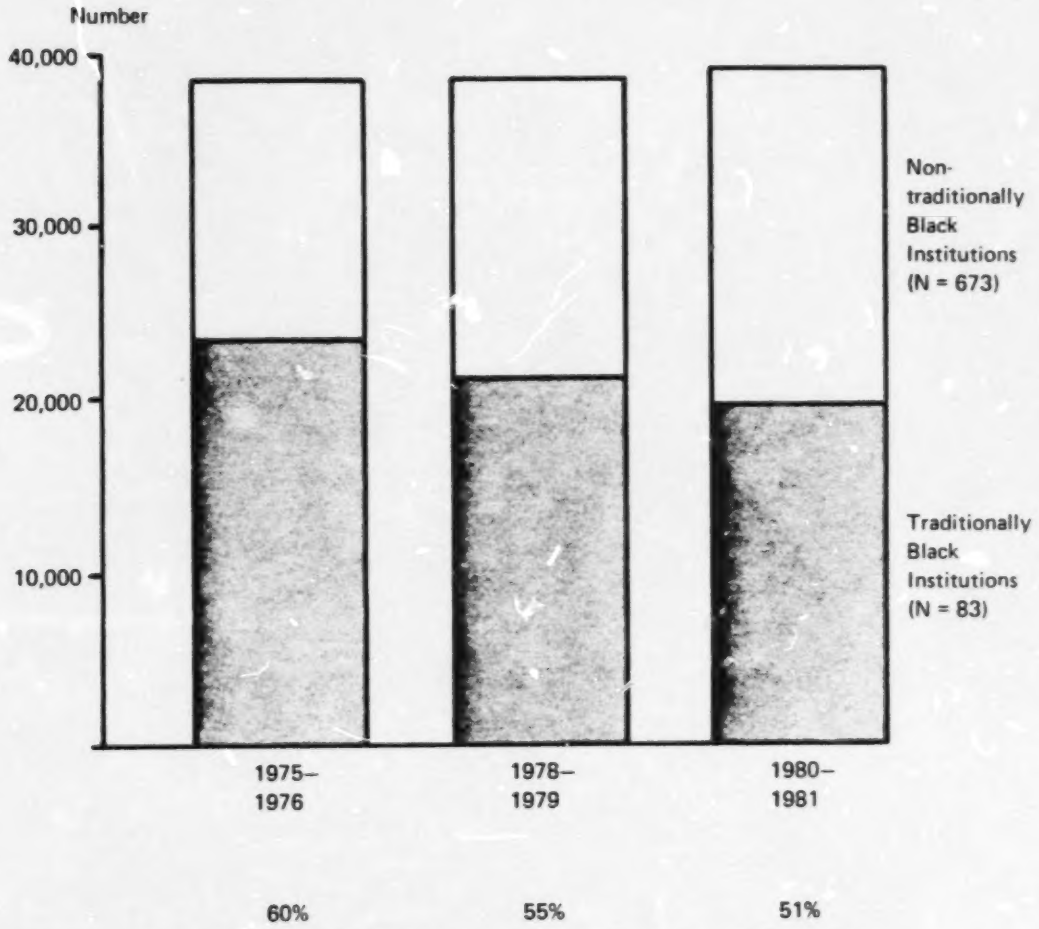
□ around symbol means the college has closed

Chart 2. -- Black full-time undergraduate enrollment in the 20 States where the Traditionally Black Institutions are located: 1970 to 1982



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, unpublished tabulations from the Opening Fall Enrollment Surveys.

Chart 3. -- Black bachelor's degree recipients in the 20 States where the Traditionally Black Institutions are located: Academic years 1975-76 to 1980-81



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, unpublished tabulations from the Earned Degrees Survey.